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ABSTRACT

Shared governance empowers teachers to increase their autonomy and contributes to their role in determining school policy and influencing student outcomes. This paper, exploratory in nature, describes the policy impact of shared governance in nine autonomous schools where the participants at each site have provided some insight into policy issues. It also focuses on the "Empowerment Project," a 3-year effort in nine school districts, nationwide, to empower professionals to empower students to become independent learners; to assist central office administrators and board of education members in establishing autonomous schools in which empowerment of staff members and students may take place; to help principals reconceptualize their roles from directors of their schools to developers of human potential; to aid teachers in decision-making and in taking decision-making responsibility; and to chronicle the empowerment process in each project school. If participative decision-making is to be successfully implemented, a wide range of policy changes will need to occur. These include a reframing of the traditional roles of administrators and teachers within a given building, the placement of decision-making authorities within the school building and district, and the involvement of school constituencies in all aspects of school life. (40 references) (JAM)

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INCREASING TEACHER AUTONOMY THROUGH SHARED GOVERNANCE:

EFFECTS ON POLICY MAKING AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

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INTRODUCTION

During the past eighteen months, reports commissioned by foundations, legislatures, and corporations, along with articles and publications of reform, have advocated the empowerment of school staff members. The assumption is made in this literature that a positive work environment brought about by staff members who are able to initiate and carry out new ideas by involvement in decision-making results in enhanced learning opportunities for students. Although the term, empowerment, is of recent vintage, the concept of employees helping make the basic decisions of the organization can be found in the management literature dating from the early 1930s. The precedent study of participative decision making was conducted in 1948 by Coch and French in a garment factory. In this study, it was found that participation produced a rise in production, less employee turnover, less absenteeism, and fewer grievances. Studies in participation decision making in business and industry today has revealed increased worker productivity and sense of ownership (Peters, 1987).

Currently, the major thrust of efforts to empower school constituencies appears to take the following forms:

- Providing teachers with a significant role in school decision making thereby developing a sense of shared governance.
- Providing teachers with control over their work environment and work conditions.
- Providing teachers with opportunities to contribute to the school in a range of professional roles: teacher, administrator, curriculum developer, mentor, learner.

With this increased interest in empowerment through greater participation in decision making, it is important to recognize the potential effects of shared governance on policy making and student outcomes. Though the initial purpose of this paper was to discuss implications from a qualitative study of four schools involved in a project on school empowerment, the fact that the 3-year study has

just begun precludes a report of those findings. However, initial contact with the nine schools in the study and interactions with participants at each site has provided some insight into policy issues that may be impacted by a school district's decision to create autonomous schools where shared governance is the norm. Thus, this paper is exploratory in nature and an initial attempt at addressing the policy impact of shared governance.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Decision Making and Empowerment

Decision making is a fundamental process in any organization. The importance of decision making in educational organizations has been recognized as a key function required by administrators (Griffiths, 1959; Lipham, 1974; Lipham, 1981). In schools, decision making is a fundamental process and is therefore critical to the effective operation of a school.

Lipham (1974, p. 155) defined decision making as a rational process "wherein awareness of a problematic state of a system, influenced by information and values, is reduced to competing alternatives, among which a choice is made, based upon estimated outcome states of the system." According to Lipham, the three dimensions of the decision-making process include: decision content, decision stages, and decision involvement. Decision content refers to "what" a decision involves. In schools, decisions are made at the instructional level and at the schoolwide or district levels. Decision involvement refers to "who" is involved in making the decisions and the extent of their involvement in the overall decision process. Decision stages refers to "how" a decision is made.

Lipham (1974) reported the six stages of decision making to include the following:

1. Identifying the nature of the problem
2. Clarifying and defining the problem

3. Formulating and weighing alternatives

4. Making the decision choice

5. Implementing the decision solution

6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the decision.

Also important are the influences of the amount, form, flow of information, the societal, organizational, and individual values, and the effects of feedback on the overall decision-making process.

Decision-making processes are dramatically affected by the philosophy and organization of the school (Wright, 1976; Feldman, 1977; Moyle, 1978; Watkins, 1978). A school climate which encourages innovative thinking, openness, and frankness among members of school-wide decision-making groups is thought to be essential (Moyle, 1977; Hall & Griffin, 1982).

Categories of decision-making

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) categorized decision making into two contrasting types according to the degree to which individuals of an organization participate in the decision-making process. Collective decisions deal with those decisions made by the majority or all of the individuals in the organization. The second category of decision making, referred to as authority decisions, are initiated and controlled from the organizational hierarchy. Decisions at the schoolwide level are authority decisions and are the ultimate responsibility of the principal. Authority decisions fall into two subcategories; which involve the authoritative approach or the participative approach. In the authoritative approach, decisions are unilaterally made by the principal without any member participation or input. On the other hand, the participative approach involves sharing viewpoints from those members in the organization, prior to a decision being reached, who will be affected by the decision outcome.

Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978) stated that there were qualitatively different types of decisions made within the various levels of an organization's hierarchy. These types of decisions include: institutional decisions, managerial decisions, and technical decisions. These researchers also examined involvement in decision making in relation to Parson's (1951) technical and managerial domains and concluded that teachers desire greater involvement in technical issues than in managerial issues.

These findings confirmed an earlier study by Bridges (1967) which reported that teachers preferred to have more participation in technical decisions that were pertinent to their daily professional operations than in managerial decisions. According to Speed (1979) teachers exhibit greater decisional deprivation in managerial decisions than those decisions made on the technical level. Duke, Showers, and Imber (1980) investigated teacher involvement in and commitment to decision making and concluded that most teachers were less anxious to participate in schoolwide or managerial decision making and derived minimal job satisfaction when they did. Contrary to these findings, Schneider (1984) reported there is a greater discrepancy between actual and desired levels of involvement regarding managerial than technical decisions.

Alutto and Belasco (1972) reported that decision involvement should be assessed in terms of the discrepancy between the actual and desired levels of involvement. The discrepancy between these two levels results in decision deprivation, decision equilibrium, or decision satiation.

According to Chamberlain (1975) both principals and teachers agree that teachers should have greater participation in decision making, but the groups differ between their perceptions of what is and what ought to be. A study conducted by Schneider (1984) confirmed Chamberlain's findings. The need for administrators to assess teachers' actual and desired levels of involvement in the decision making process is an important issue in participative decision-

making. It appears that both groups need to understand and be in mutual agreement of their present level of involvement in and what it ought to be in the decision-making process.

Participative management and decision making

Participative decision making has been defined by Crane (1976) as a management approach which allows and encourages subordinates, in particular situations, to participate in decisions which will affect them. Earlier, Lowin's study (cited in Dunstan, 1981) described participative management as an organizational operation by which decisions are arrived at by including those persons who are to execute those decisions. Patterns, Purkey, & Parker (cited in Rice, 1987) concluded that putting decision-making power as close to the point of delivery as possible makes implementation of those decisions not only possible, but successful. The overall benefits of adopting a team management approach of school governance include improving the quality of communications and the decision-making practices, staff motivation, and the enhanced coordination of tasks and plans (Erickson and Gmelch, 1977).

Participatory management practices are supported and endorsed by many professional and national organizations (Grindle, 1982). Erickson and Gmelch (1977) cited one reason for the increased support for participative management on the increased national attention on education, coupled with the push for accountability, and the increased pressure on administrators to run effective schools.

Several participatory management models have been reported in the literature. Erickson and Gmelch (1977) developed a participative management role which identified six components of participatory management in terms of a team management concepts.

1. Two or more people work together on a management activity with a common mission or goal.

2. The team consists of representatives of important sub-systems in the organization who work together on a common goal.

3. General input into administrative policy decisions are provided (excluding the details of management).

4. Teams are comprised of a small number of individuals, throughout the organization who have different backgrounds, skills, and knowledge who work together toward a specific goal.

5. Participative management involves employees in the decision-making process which affects their work.

6. Team Management is synonymous to participatory management, administrative team, leadership team, executive team or representative team.

Kuhns (1986) described a team management model which used Likert's "linking pin" concept. This model emphasizes the use of overlapping work groups. In this model the principal is a facilitator of his own team as well as a leader who is able to influence the superintendent's team. Therefore, the principal must be skilled as a team leader as well as a team member. This style of management significantly differs from the traditional style of management which views principals as planners, organizers, and evaluators (Kuhns, 1986).

Theory Z is a relatively new management model which originated in Japan which relies on the team management approach. This model promotes individuals working together effectively in order to yield greater productivity, profit, job satisfaction, loyalty, and performance (Ouchi, 1981). This management model relies exclusively on decision making by consensus. Individuals who are affected by the decision have input and involvement in the process of making decisions. The feeling of ownership in the decision process is an essential element to the overall effectiveness of this model.

Literature on organizational dynamics supports the truism that employees are more productive if they are involved in making decisions that affect their work lives. However, the desire of individuals to participate in the decision-making process is neither universal among members of a group nor evenly distributed throughout the organization. Maeroff (1988) stated that "two main issues surrounding teachers and their ability to be change agents have to do with the use of their time and the events to which teachers shape instructional philosophy and content rather than have it dictated to them" (p. 97).

Prior to this, Dawson (1984) examined educational change in relation to three contextual factors which influenced teacher involvement in decision making and planning. These factors were: the availability of time and other resources, local concerns and priorities, and staff perceptions of administrative commitment to change. Grindle (1982) believed that teachers must perceive their involvement in the decision-making to be genuine and that their opinion has a significant impact in the decision outcome.

Power and empowerment

The traditional definition of power revolves around an economic scarcity theory: that power is limited, so that if I have less, you have more, and vice versa. This definition is contrary to the ideas of empowerment. Empowerment broadens the base of decision making because it results in better, more informed, more accepted programs and policies, and includes total commitment of the school board, superintendent, principals, teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community (American Education, 1987). Everyone in the school environment has a sense of ownership and of power. Empowerment "releases a feeling of professional pride and investment in "this school is my school" (p. 46).

Empowerment requires that the governing structures in schools be modified, this means that change must occur, and change is often met with resistance. School-site management systems is a strategy which promotes the concepts of empowerment and of empowering individuals in schools. This system promotes the adoption of school-site committees comprised of teachers, administrators, and community representatives. In addition, school-site management affords teachers the opportunities to participate in decision making in all areas that affect them and their students. It is based on the principle that schools need to be autonomous and have their own personalized school culture. It is supported by innovative management theories that stress the importance of decentralization, employee motivation in the decisions that affect their work, and the development of feelings of ownership in the decision process as well as in the decision outcome.

> "The autonomy that teachers have within their classrooms is considerably compromised by their exclusion from decisions on issues that affect life in the classroom, such as school structure and organization, disciplinary procedures, curriculum content, academic standards, staffing needs and hiring decisions, and spending priorities" (p. 10).

As a result, teachers have been denied the opportunity to fully demonstrate their professional abilities, and the schools and students have been penalized and denied the full benefits of their expertise. There is a strong feeling that if teaching is to emerge as a profession, teachers need more control over all the conditions that affect teaching and learning (American Educator).

Lightfoot (1986) defined empowerment as "the opportunities a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority" (p. 9). Various themes of empowerment evolved as a result of her research on goodness in schools. In her studies, principals established close alliances with trusted associates within the organization. Furthermore, they understood the powerful dynamics of the organization and the role they served in shaping the forces within the school.

These principals were cognizant of the effect of their own personality and leadership style on the forces within the school. In addition, these principals shared their power and redistributed that power within the school organization. By encouraging and sharing their power they attempted to redefine the traditional hierarchical patterns between administrators and teachers. By actively encouraging and promoting participation among the various group members in their schools they created environments which allowed teachers to be empowered.

According to Gibboney and Gould (1987) empowerment is defined as the shifting of the decision-making process from the superintendent's office (district level) or the principal's office (school level) to the teacher-administrative work groups/committees (building level). This shift is responsible for providing some of the impetus for change from the traditional autoritarianism practices to a more collaborative decision-making process.

Lightfoot (1986) stresses that greater participation in the decision-making process allows teachers and students, alike, to feel more connected, more committed, and pulled into the process. Teachers need to be treated as central actors in the chain of empowerment. "In good schools the image is one of teachers with voice and vision" (Lightfoot, 1986, p. 24). School cultures that support experimentation and risk taking provide empowering opportunities for teachers to shape the educational environment. Teachers who were empowered themselves were able to create environments which promoted opportunities for students to be empowered.

Rice (1987) in a review of the literature on empowerment reported several common needs which must be met in order for empowerment to occur. These needs include:

1. appropriate occasions and places for professional work—more occasions and place, the more support—;

2. training and followup by credible persons;

3. commitment of teachers;

4. technical assistance;

5. ongoing feedback;

6. hard money (p. 16).

Advantages of participative decision making

Shared governance allows teachers to express their opinions concerning critical school issues. It also provides teachers with an opportunity to make decisions that affect them. Meiner (1978) reported that shared decision making promotes group concerns and staff ownership of the outcome and ensures that decisions are implemented successfully. According to Brodinsky (1983), other significant advantages of shared governance in participatory management include building trust, increasing teacher morale, and increasing teacher effectiveness (Brodinsky, 1983).

Dunstan (1981) described five major advantages of participative decision making which include the following:

1. The encouragement of human growth and development;

2. More willing acceptance of decisions;

3. Enhanced quality of decisions;

4. Enhanced sense of teacher belonging;

5. The satisfaction of teachers' desires for democratic structures.

Prior to Dunstan's analysis of participative decision making, Haynes and Garner (1977) provided eight benefits of shared administrative decision making. These benefits are the result of the principal's ability to share leadership with the members of the organization in defining common goals, planning

together, and developing group feelings and teamwork. Crane (1976) also found benefits for adoption of participative management practices.

Studies have been conducted which examine the positive effects of participative decision making on job satisfaction (Alutto & Balasco, 1972; Watkins, 1978; Theirback, 1980; Flannery, 1980; Lipham, Dunstan & Rankin, 1981). Brodinsky (1984) found that employees tend to become more effective and feel more job satisfaction as they are provided with more opportunity and power. However, greater teacher participation in the decision making, alone, does not ensure job satisfaction.

For students, schools which are organized to provide greater opportunities for participant involvement in decision making can increase student self-esteem and motivation to learn in several ways. When teachers are joined together in a collaborative environment where planning and problem solving in response to the different needs and learning styles of students is conducted through participant decision-making, the quality of student learning is greatly enhanced (Lightfoot, 1986). In addition, teachers' sense of empowerment through shared governance can heighten teacher morale and performance, increasing the chances that students will benefit. Students benefit when teachers are more directly involved in decisions that impact curriculum, structuring and groupings of students, instruction, and school climate (Carnegie Schools, 1988).

Constraints of participative decision making

Although numerous researchers have described the advantages of participative decision making, there are those who describe the constraints participative management entails. Dunstan (1981) reported seven major constraints of participative decision making which include the following:

1. Inherent hierarchical constraints
2. Limited effects on non-participants

3. Distance of decision from the point of implementation
4. Involvement of members in too many decisions
5. Some issues are irrelevant to group members
6. Disadvantages of group problem solving
7. Poor implementation of decisions

Obviously, any attempt at developing a sense of shared governance in a school has the potential to impact policy. Participant roles and decision-making structures, dictated by policy at the state, district, and school level, will change drastically in an empowered school environment. In order to begin to understand the impact, it is useful to study those schools moving towards developing empowered participants with a sense of shared governance. The "Empowered School District" permits this initial exploration.

THE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Though empowerment and teacher autonomy has become a national focus, little direct assistance has been given to districts in developing empowered schools. Much less emphasis has been placed on developing empowered students. The "Empowered School District Project" directed by the authors of this paper is a three-year effort to facilitate the work of nine school districts nationwide. These districts are creating school environments where empowered professionals and staff empower students to become independent learners. The discussion of policy in this paper emanates from these districts.

Objectives of project

The purpose of the 3-year project are several:

1. To assist central office administrators and board of education members in establishing autonomous schools in which empowerment of staff members and students may take place;

2. To assist principals in reconceptualizing their roles from that of directors of their schools to developers of human potential;
3. To assist teachers in learning to make decisions and accepting the responsibility for their decisions;
4. To assist teachers in reconceptualizing their roles from the directors of classrooms to developers of student potential, and
5. To chronicle the empowerment process developed in each project school so that new schools may be added to an empowered schools network in subsequent years.

Initiation of project

The project began with a three day "Empowerment Conference" where superintendents, principals, and representative teachers from each of the nine districts came together. The conference's primary mission was to explore the viability of empowerment project for school districts. Specifically, the conference had these purposes:

1. The first purpose was to develop common understandings about the project. The empowerment process is conceptualized as a very individualistic and complex process. Thus, the first purpose was extremely important to the ultimate success of the project. Much time was spent exploring a definition of an "empowered child" and "empowered school."
2. The second purpose was product oriented. At the end of the conference a specific plan of action covering the entire three years of the project was detailed.

> There is no thought that all schools of the project would proceed in some lockstep manner toward a state of empowerment. Each should move through the process as local conditions allow.

The school districts represent great diversity in several ways. It is felt that much of the recognition for efforts in shared decision making and empowerment activities has gone to large school systems, but these large systems do not necessarily represent what a majority of schools look like across the country. Project participants reflected the diversity that is more realistic.

Large, medium, and small districts within urban, suburban, and rural communities are participants. One private school is a participant. Four of the schools are high schools and five are elementary schools. Three districts operate under collective bargaining with teacher unions.

The conference established a collaborative environment with districts establishing plans to network for further sharing of empowerment efforts and mutual support. A significant focus for discussion was the empowering of the child.

District teams spent their team time discussing and developing a three-year action plan that reflected an initial year of **formulation**, a second year for **developing and testing**, and a third year for **implementation.**

Items drawn from various action plans include:

Preliminary Phase (immediately following conference)

1. Summary of conference presented to teachers with reactions
2. Establish role of superintendents, teachers, students, principals, parents in an empowered school district
3. Preparation of taped reflections of principals following

conference

4. Develop mission statements
5. Present action plan to faculty and staff for their involvement in continued development and refinement
6. Hold retreats, "dialogues," etc. to increase involvement of board
7. Secure board commitment to involvement in project

Year 1 1988-1989 - Formulation

1. Establish study groups-think tanks
2. Train in team effectiveness
3. Conduct analysis of current school structure
4. Establish role of chronicler and facilitator—training by project directors
5. Leadership retreat
6. Involvement of faculty in hiring/evaluation of new faculty
7. Conduct parent needs assessment
8. Establish interdisciplinary team of professionals
9. Chronicle events
10. Review literature re: establishment of faculty study group process
11. Document ways "Dialogue" process empowers students
12. Establish project newsletter to share efforts
13. Visits from project directors and other consultants
14. Superintendents meet at AASA, Orlando
15. Principals and superintendents record reflections on tape and send to directors

Summer 1988

Hold conference with principals and facilitators

Year 2 1989 - Developing and Testing

1. Develop curriculum that is interdisciplinary in content
2. Initiate a curriculum process that creates an independent learner
3. Develop parent mentor plan
4. Implement "Dialogue" process throughout school
5. Chronicle events
6. Involve facilitator, project directors, and consultants in staff development re: feedback strategies, self-managing teams, participatory decision making, etc.
7. Empowerment team meets regularly
8. Plan summer empowerment retreat
9. Report to parents at PTA
10. Visit project school sites
11. Continue project newsletter
12. Develop measure of empowerment of learning/school/district

Year 3 - 1990-1991 - Implementation

1. Consider initial school as pilot site and create cross-district teams for possible expansion to other schools
2. Formative assessments
3. Continued assistance from consultants, project directors, and other participatory schools
4. Measure level of empowerment of learner/school/district
5. Implement parent empowerment plan
6. Assess impact of cross-age grouping, "dialogue," "Junior Leadership"
7. Board retreat

8. Refocus on future direction after three-year involvement in project
9. Chronicle events
10. Disseminate project newsletter
11. Conference with empowerment project school participants.

Evaluation

It was the consensus of the conference participants that evaluation is an important component of the project. They felt evaluation is critical in determining when milestones are achieved in the empowerment process. It is also important to gather data that would assist in the testing and refinement of empowerment strategies.

Among the evaluation activities generated by the participants are the following:

1. Formative and summative evaluation procedures tied to activities to action plan
2. Development of instruments to measure level of student, school district empowerment
3. Anecdotal records
4. School climate/student attitude measures; parental attitude measures
5. Sociological observations/interviews
6. Case studies of students
7. Documentation of team/group process-effectiveness
8. Statistical data analysis

In addition, the project utilizes the following data sources:

1. Tape recordings prepared monthly by principals and twice a year by superintendents reflecting their perceptions of the district's empowerment process. Other types of information may also be gathered.
2. A chronicler; a teacher on the school staff trained by project directors to observe and chronicle the ongoing empowerment activities at the school site.
3. Logs kept by facilitators and directors relative to all project activities and interactions with school sites and school constituencies.

Other significant questions addressed by the study which are linked to shared governance are: (a) How can time during the contract day be allocated to teachers for meetings to consider ideas associated with empowered teachers as well as meetings to consider ideas associated with empowered decision making? (b) What processes can be utilized to assist the teacher, principal, and central office administrator to empower others with tasks and decisions that will bring high motivation to the employee and significant improvements to the learning program? (c) What is the role of the principal who has empowered the school staff? (d) How much responsibility for initiating ideas and carrying them out will the staff exercise beyond their standard job descriptions? (e) What are the likenesses and differences between decentralization and empowerment of the school staff? (f) Are the behaviors of an empowered staff similar to those expected for an empowered student body? (g) Do teaching staff want to accept the responsibility for their decisions, spend the time necessary for reaching decisions, and develop the skills necessary to effectively carry out agreed upon plans? (h) Will the empowerment of staff and administrators provide for the inculcation of ideas to solve old and new problems which interfere with the learning process for students?

POLICY IMPLICATIONS RELATIVE TO SHARED GOVERNANCY

The initial time spent by the authors at the nine school district sites working with faculty, school board, superintendent and parents and reports by principals as they initiate involvement reveals a diversity of areas impacted by the establishment of structures for participative decision-making. Because the establishment of empowered schools is an individualistic school process, policy implications may vary across districts. In addition, as the process evolves, changes in certain policy may surface at various times. However, for the purposes of this paper, some generalizations based on the initial work with project districts may inform the discussion.

The notion of shared governance appears to imply the involvement of school participants in decisions relative to all or some of the following: curriculum, instruction, structure of school day, accountability, and budget. Policy focusing on these areas may emanate from several levels: state, district, school, as well as union contracts. Thus, policy implications surface at these levels.

Policy implications at the state level

Many states have passed reform legislation that may preclude teacher initiated programmatic decisions. For instance, in many states, legislatures have mandated both the number of instructional hours spent in certain subjects as well as what specific curriculum will be taught.

In addition, teacher involvement in selection of personnel and decisions to hire certain types of individuals with certain skills may not be feasible unless state certification policies are reviewed and amended.

States such as Colorado and Massachusetts have recognized the need to waive certain state mandates in order to create autonomous schools. The precedent exists for such action. The North Carolina State Board of Education waived

state teacher tenure policies for the Charlotte Mecklenburg County Schools to allow the district to implement its own career ladder program.

District level policy implications

An individual school would find it difficult to create an environment of shared governance without first being allowed to function within the district as an autonomous school. Currently, the relative magnitude of allowable decision areas remains quite small for teachers if individual schools function according to mandates and decision passed down from most district level officials. One of the major concerns of project school teachers is the idea of participating in locally initiated decisions that impact the school only to have a policy at the central office void that decision. One faculty member stated, "I don't want to spend time making a decision only to have the school board or superintendent tell me no." District level policy will, most likely, present the greatest need for change than at any other level in some states.

Preliminary work with the schools reveals that shared governance among individual school participants in the nine districts in the project may impact district policies relative to the following areas:

- composition of school faculty numbers/employment/dismissal
- student promotion and retention
- class size
- accountability processes
- allocation of student support services
- selection of curriculum materials
- grade level organization
- scheduling of instructional time

- methods/models of instruction (some districts utilize a teacher evaluation system tied to a particular instructional methodology)
- teacher/principal evaluation

Policy implications with collective bargaining

The three districts operating with teacher unions face unique policy issues in the attempt to create greater teacher decision-making opportunities. In particular, union contracts specify criteria and procedures for areas including use of teacher time and professional development.

More specifically, union contracts may dictate class size as well as the least amount of planning time available to teachers on a daily basis. Collective bargaining agreements can specify the schedule for staff meetings.

A faculty at an individual school may not be able to decide to modify staff development requirements and opportunities to meet their unique needs if such regulations are part of the formal bargaining contract or unless the contract is amended.

Finally, empowering teachers through increased participation in decisions involving staff selection practices and teacher evaluation procedures may not be permitted without modifications in the contract agreement.

Districts are recognizing the necessity to attempt to make alterations in contract agreements in the above areas. These areas appear to be important in the empowerment process in some of the project schools.

Policy implications at the school level

To philosophically embrace the concept of empowerment at the school level, it is inevitable that roles may have to be redefined. This is particularly relevant in terms of decision making processes. The concept of shared governance heralds profound changes in perceptions about who decides what. In

the project schools, principals and teachers are experiencing great struggles as they attempt to redefine roles and patterns of decision making away from the traditional hierarchical structure. The primary issues concern (1) principal fear of being "overrun by teachers" if teachers can participate in decisions not historically within their purview and (2) establishment of a viable process for shared governance and collaborative decision making.

Among the many areas, identified by participants at the various nine project sites, possibly affected by participative decision making:

- organization of the school day
- utilization of school facility space
- extra duties (supervision of buses, for example) assigned to staff
- parental involvement
- teacher evaluation
- budget allocations
- resource selection
- personnel selection
- homework policies
- staff development

SHARED GOVERNANCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES

One of the critical areas for project school districts is the area of student outcomes in an empowered school. Most schools have yet to describe the empowered student. Without some conceptualization of this idea, it is difficult to talk about expectations for student outcomes. The project emphasizes the uniqueness of each school and its constituencies. A student body at a school in Utah may vary greatly from the characteristics of a student body in Alabama. Community and parental expectations also vary.

Schools within the project continue to struggle with what an empowered student in their schools should look like. Student outcomes hinge on the answers to this question. A parent at one site described the empowered student as one "... who can make his/her own decisions." Obviously, this definition of an empowered student requires a whole new set of assumptions relative to assessment of the skills and knowledge that this student would be expected to display. It is too early in the project study to draw conclusions about student outcomes but one would intuitively assume that outcomes for students in an empowered school will differ greatly from current expectations measured solely by scores on achievement tests.

CONCLUSION

As the focus strengthens on the development of innovative organizational systems aimed at increasing participant involvement in decision making at the school level, traditional methods of policy making will need to be reassessed. Current policies as they now exist at the state, district, and building levels may greatly impede the empowerment effort.

The initial efforts of nine school districts involved in the "Empowered School District Project" reveal that a wide range of policy changes will need to occur if participative decision making is successfully implemented at these sites. Empowerment impacts policy at all levels. Embracing the concept of empowerment of teachers and students will require a reframing of roles, placement of decision points, and level of involvement of school constituencies in all aspects of school life. What is being learned from the project is that this reframing cannot be done overnight. It is, indeed, <u>evolutionary</u>.

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